

BH2020/01030 / BH2020/01031

Basement Flat 74 Montpelier Road Brighton BN1 3BD

Regency Society Comments

This application is for proposals which are detrimental to the special interest of the listed building, the character of the conservation area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings. As the Heritage Statement recognises, the special interest of No 74 derives substantially from its being part of the wider terrace. This is remarkably intact; all the houses have retained their paved areas over the original coal cellars between the line of the railings and their sunken basement areas.

While the reinstatement of the railings would be welcome, the demolition of the coal cellar and the relocation of the basement steps would not only cause permanent loss of historic fabric but would undermine the hierarchical distinction and separation between the service areas in the basement and the rest of the house. The Design and Access Statement asserts that removing the coal cellar would “improve the appearance of the property by revealing the historic façade. ... (and) improve the overall visual appearance of the terrace as a whole.” Rather, it would reveal a wall that was never meant to be seen and adversely affect the integrity of the whole terrace.

The replacement of the plastic windows and door at the low significance rear of the basement with timber windows would not constitute the enhancement claimed as the proposed detailing bears little resemblance to Regency practice, including as it does top-hung night vents.

This application to create a bedroom with ensuite bathroom in the back extension and use the current bedroom at the front as the living room appears in practice to be a proposal to convert a one-bedroom flat into a two-bedroom one. The new shower room is only accessible through the new living room, although it could readily be sited in the adjacent space as a guest washroom directly accessible from the hallway. The present living room is large enough to be a living/kitchen/diner, with direct access through the new French windows to the southeast facing patio and garden, rather than to a smaller new northeast facing patio overlooked from the street, as proposed.

If the front room remains a bedroom, there is no justification in creating a second patio outside it and little benefit in increasing the natural light to it, while retaining the original coal cellar would maintain its privacy.

In any scenario, the reoccupation of the flat should be conditional on the prior reinstatement of the railings.

25/5/20